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*Kentucky Coffee Tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) B. Bradburn*

March 2024

# SEEDLINGS

## Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

What more substantial service to conservation than to practice it on one's own land?--Aldo Leopold



*Skunk Cabbage (Symplocarpus foetidus) J. Hagen*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

The very welcoming title of our March presentation, "New to Natives? No Problem!," with Christopher Hart, seems especially appropriate for KAWO's first in-person monthly program of 2024. We look forward to seeing you at the relatively new-to-us space of Portage District Library. Come early at 6:00 pm for social time, where experienced KAWO members will be available to talk with you informally about native plants as well as our various activities and programs. One of these is our 2024 Native Plant Sale. See the announcement below, and look for more details on our social media in the coming weeks. Please also check out [our updated schedule](#) to find many more opportunities to learn and connect, indoors and out, in every season this year.

**Beth Bradburn**  
*Editor*

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## **New to Natives? No Problem!**

**Wednesday, March 27, 6:30pm-8:00pm at Portage District Library  
with Christopher Hart, Horticulturist, Hartsclapes LLC**

Join us at Portage District Library for our first in-person program of 2024! Our guest speaker, Christopher Hart, has been designing native landscapes professionally for over a decade, and had been designing as a hobby for twenty years prior. This presentation is born from hindsight and includes all the mistakes, myths, misconceptions, and “secrets” he encountered on the way. With this wisdom in hand, beginners can feel more confident working with natives and achieve their landscape goals.

View our full program schedule for 2024 [here](#).



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**If you've missed any of our previous presentations, not to worry.**

Visit the KAWO YouTube channel, where you can view our programs at your convenience.

**[Click Here to visit our YouTube channel](#)**

You can also click on the small red YouTube icon above,  
underneath the Table of Contents.

Past issues of Seedlings can be found [here](#), and by clicking the link between the  
Facebook and YouTube links above.

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## **A Reminder That Times Change**



Please note that our monthly programs now begin at 6:30 pm! We changed our start time when we moved to Portage District Library. We host social time from 6:00, so come early and talk with us before the presentation starts at 6:30.

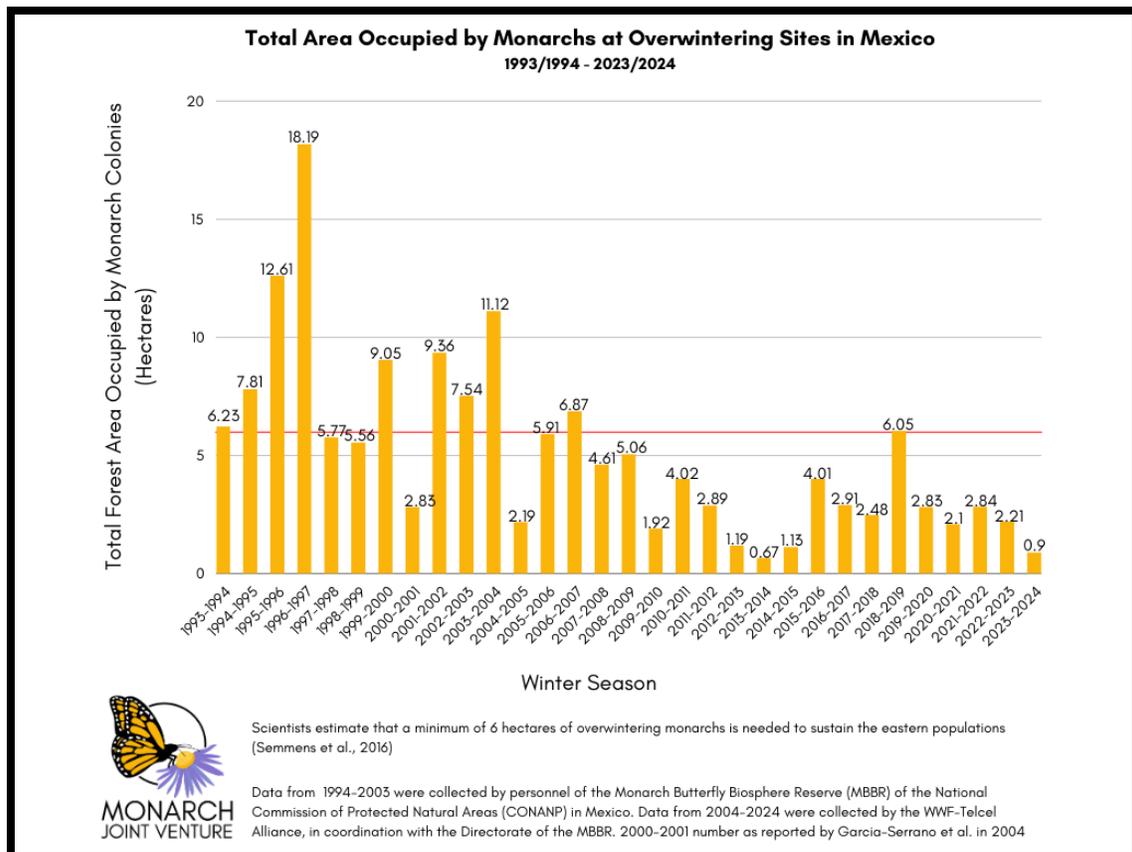
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# Monarch Population and Waystation Update

Ilse Gebhard

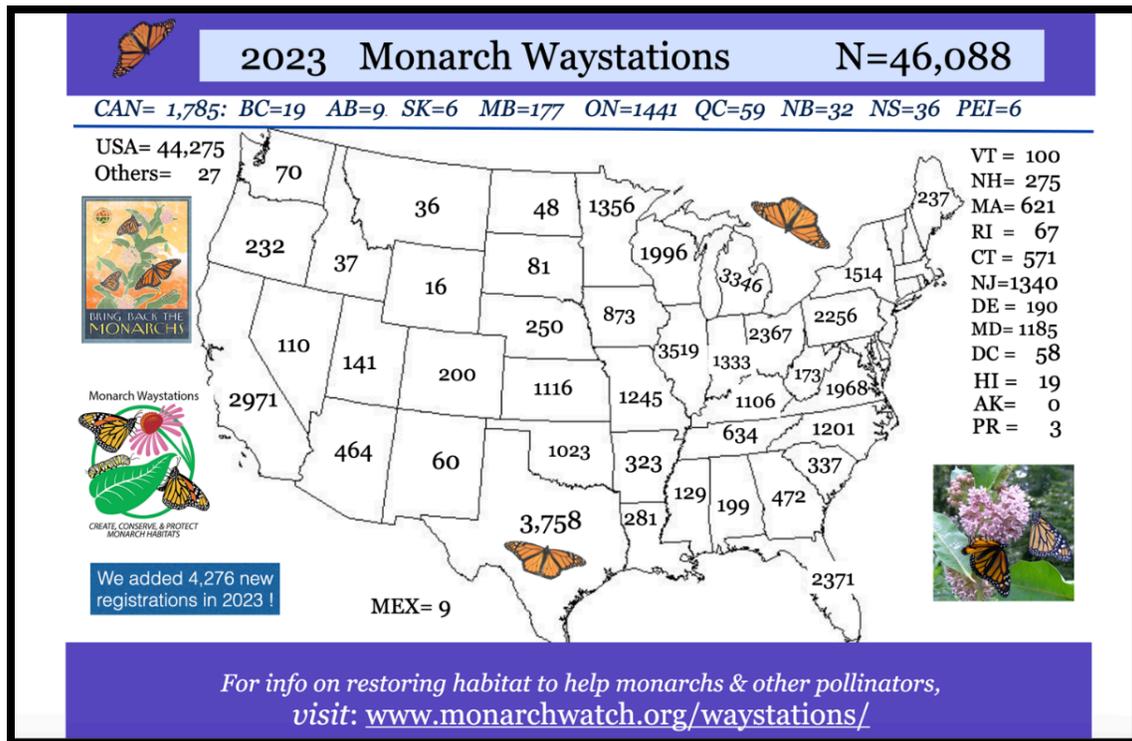
Unfortunately, there again is bad news about the Monarch overwintering population in Mexico. While a lower number was expected from data collected last summer and fall, the population declined much more than expected, from 2.21 hectares last year to 0.90 hectares, a 59.3% decline. It is the second lowest number to date – the lowest of 0.67 hectares having occurred the winter of 2013-2014.

We must increase our efforts to plant milkweeds and native nectar plants and reach out to other gardeners to do the same.



On the Monarch Watch Waystation Program front, the number of waystations increased in Michigan and overall. Michigan is still in third place, with Texas and Illinois ahead and California just behind.

The concept of planting Keystone species to preserve the highest biodiversity of butterflies and moths is a very important one, but unfortunately there are many insects whose larval stages are very fussy eaters, often feeding on plants in only one genus or even one species. Monarch caterpillars feed only on milkweeds, as do several moth species. But we should not overlook the bugs, beetles, and weevils that are obligate milkweed feeders as well when considering which plants are Keystone species.



For more on KAWO's efforts to save monarchs, including information on how you can become involved, visit [our blog](#).

## Virtual Courses on Ecology-Based Landscape Design and Gardening

Wild Ones National co-sponsors New Directions in the American Landscape, an educational series dedicated to the art, culture, and science of ecology-based landscape design founded in 1990 by Landscape Designer Larry Weaner. NDAL has announced its spring 2024 schedule. The courses, for both professionals and non-professionals, are virtual, with recordings available for three months. For more information and to register, visit [their website](#).

Highlights from our Spring 2024 Virtual Series

<p>Designing Biodiversity through Pollinator-Plant Interactions</p> <p>with Evva Abramson March 19, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>	<p>Sourcing Native Plants and Seeds: A Homeowners Guide</p> <p>with Ian Cotter March 26, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>
<p>The Benefits of Grazing in Grassland Restoration</p> <p>with Rick Rath April 4, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>	<p>Native "Weeds" as Beneficial Workhorses</p> <p>with Ethan Dropkin April 9, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>
<p>Efficiency, Finance, and Professional Fulfillment: Creating a Healthy Landscape Practice</p> <p>with Larry Weaner &amp; Mandi Decker April 11, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>	<p>Native Lawns: Biodiversity, Beauty, and Function</p> <p>with Kristine Bays April 16, 2024   3 - 4:15 PM ET</p>

**+ More!**

## Look for Mourning Cloak Butterflies in Late March

Ilse Gebhard

We have four butterfly species in Michigan that overwinter here as adults, mostly hiding in hollow logs, woodpiles, and outbuildings or behind loose bark. They are Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*), Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), and Compton (*Nymphalis vau-album*) and Milbert's (*Nymphalis milberti*) Tortoise Shells. Their early flight dates listed in Mogens C. Nielsen's *Michigan Butterflies and Skippers* are March 22, March 21, March 19, and March 22 respectively.



The close range of early flight dates for the four species is not unexpected as they all will take advantage of an occasional warm and sunny day in late winter to emerge from hibernation. Not much in bloom for them to feed on in late March but all four species are known to feed on the then available tree sap. Later in the summer they also feed on over-ripe fruit.

*Mourning Cloaks Drinking Sap* J. Leppard



While all four species are known to be common, all but Mourning Cloaks are often overlooked. At a wingspan of 2 7/8 – 3 3/8 inches it is one of our larger butterflies, about the size of the Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) and larger than the other three species. Not only size but the appearance of the upper wing surfaces is what gets people's attention. These upper surfaces are purplish black with wide bright yellow margins edged with iridescent blue spots. Very flashy!

*Mourning Cloak Upper Side* R. Schipper



A few years ago, a balmy Monday in late March was a Mourning Cloak Day. I saw one in the yard and I had an e-mail from a friend who had seen one in her yard. How do I remember it was a Monday in late March? Well, it was Audubon Society of Kalamazoo meeting night and the social time sounded livelier than it had for months. After being cooped up all winter, birders were eager to get out and see what migrant birds the warm front might have brought in and also to share their sightings.

*Mourning Cloak Caterpillar I. Gebhard*



Everyone seemed to have seen or heard Red-winged Blackbirds, the number of American Robins had increased, several Turkey Vultures were spotted circling overhead, someone's Eastern Phoebe had returned to their yard, Sandhill Cranes were heard flying north, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was spotted at someone's feeder. Several members, who knew of my interest in butterflies, came up to me and told me of this wondrous butterfly they had seen that day and I could tell them, yes, it was a great day for birds and for Mourning Cloaks.

*Mourning Cloak Underside R. Schipper*



Mourning Cloaks lay their eggs in clusters. In Michigan the preferred host plants are willows, although the caterpillars will also feed on aspen, birch, elm, and hackberry. Early larval stages feed in groups but become solitary as older larvae. The pupa can be mistaken for a curled up dead leaf. While the upper side of the butterfly is very flashy, the underside is less so. Don't be surprised if you see a Mourning Cloak disappear and reappear with each stroke of its wings.

*Mourning Cloak Chrysalis I. Gebhard*

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## **Glacial Gifts: Garden Design for Dry, Sunny Slopes**

**Mike Weis**

Here in Kalamazoo county, most of our landscape is the product of outwash from glacier activity over 10,000 years ago. (*Warning: armchair geology lesson from a fool*) Essentially, a confluence of glacial moraine Lobes, Sublobes and Interlobes of the enormous Laurentide Ice Sheet pushed and receded through our area, forming our landscape into rolling hills, ravines, kettles, and kames. These undulating dips and swells were constructed from the detritus of the violent movement of those monstrous bulldozers of ice! As a result, a lot of the soil in our area is awash in this glacial debris: Sandy loam or loamy sand with occasional gravel. This type of loosely textured soil allows for moisture to pass through it quickly.



Read the full blog post [here](#).

*Eastern Prickly Pear (Opuntia humifusa) M. Weis*

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## **Recommended Reading**

from the editor



In her essay "[Is Your Yard Undergrown?](#)," Nancy Lawson movingly and wittily analyzes the biased language that many journalists uncritically absorb from the lawn care and pest control industries. Native plant gardeners will find her reframing of this vocabulary useful and validating.

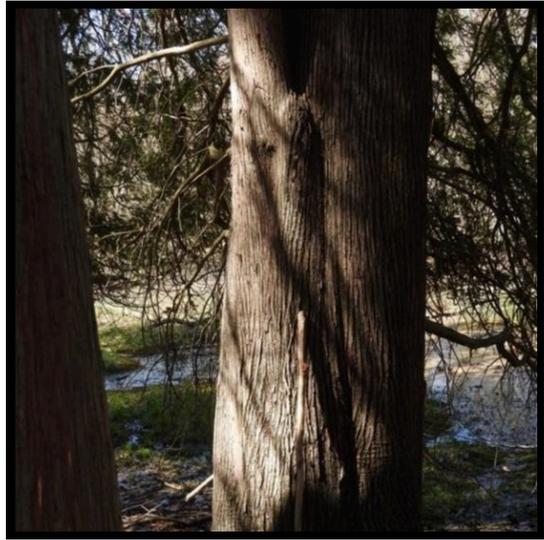
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## **Who Am I?**

A native plant ID quiz from Ilse Gebhard



I. Gebhard



R. Schipper

Click [here](#) for the answer!



Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)



Kalamazoo Area

NativePlant  
Sale!

Order Online

April 13-May 5

[kalamazoo.wildones.org](http://kalamazoo.wildones.org)

Pick-Up May 22 & 23 at  
Hidden Savanna Nursery

**Community Events of Interest**

**Saturday, March 2 - 1:30pm-4:00pm:** Stewardship Workday, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Learn more.](#)

**Sunday, March 3 - 8:00am-6:00pm:** Michigan Native Plant Conference, Kellogg Center, East Lansing. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, March 9 - 9:00pm-4:00pm:** Maple Sugar Festival, Kalamazoo Nature Center. [Learn more.](#)

**Sunday, March 10 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** Volunteer Day, Kleinstuck Preserve. Meet at the Maple Street YMCA tennis courts.

**Monday, March 11 - 6:30pm-7:30pm:** Invasive Species Spotlight: Jumping Worms, Wild Ones River City online event. [Learn more.](#)

**Thursday, March 14 - 7:00pm:** Pints and Native Plants, an informal meet-up at [Brewery Outré](#) in Kalamazoo. [Learn more.](#)

**Friday, March 15 - 11:00am-12:00pm:** Conservation in a Changing World Lecture Series: Biodiversity in Our Backyard, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Learn more.](#)

**Monday, March 18 - 7:00pm-8:00pm:** Michigan Botanical Society Southwestern Chapter Program: Dune Thistle, People's Church, Kalamazoo. [Learn more.](#)

**Wednesday, March 27 - 6:30pm-8:00pm:** "New to Natives? No Problem!," with Christopher Hart, a monthly presentation hosted by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones at Portage District Library. [Learn more.](#)

*Editor's note: If you know of any local events pertaining to native plants that you feel may interest our readers, please send them along to us at the address below. Thanks!*

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## **What's Happening at the National Office**

Check out our [National Office web site](#)

To read the most recent reports from the board of directors,

[Log In to the Member Only Area.](#)

**Thank you for your interest and support of Wild Ones!**

Not a member? [Click Here](#) for information on how you can support Wild Ones.

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**SEEDLINGS** is edited by Beth Bradburn. It appears mostly monthly.  
The next regular issue will arrive in March. **Deadline for the April issue is March 20.**

[Send Submission](#)

Contributing Editor:

Ilse Gebhard

**To share comments and suggestions, simply reply to this email.**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

Find more information and news at [www.KalamazooWildOnes.org](http://www.KalamazooWildOnes.org)  
and [www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes](https://www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes)



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